

The wartime cents keep surfacing

By Roger Boye

SOME QUESTIONS from the numismatic mailbox:

● Q.—I have a 1943 zinc-coated steel cent that has the year missing. All that is stamped is the "19." Is there any knowledge of such coins existing, and, if so, what is the value of the coin?—T. B., Franklin Park

A.—Assuming your coin is genuine [that is, someone didn't simply scrape off the "4" and "3"], it is listed in error guides as "1943 with various blank digits in the date." The value listed is 40 cents in fine condition, and \$1 in uncirculated condition. These values are about twice the retail selling prices of regular 1943 zinc-coated steel cents.

The Treasury Department resorted to the use of zinc-coated steel cents in 1943 because of a shortage of copper during World War II.

● Q.—Modern U. S. currency carries two signatures, those of the secretary of the Treasury and the treasurer of the United States. What exactly does

the U. S. treasurer do in the government?—B.N., Chicago

A.—Not much. Current U. S. Treasurer Mrs. Francine Neff recently described her \$36,000-a-year job as follows: "The treasurer must promote U. S. savings bonds, organize the Treasury Department's Bicentennial celebration, and 'communicate the programs and policies' of the Ford administration."

One of the treasurer's traditional jobs, keeping tabs on federal spending, was transferred in 1974 to a new agency, the Bureau of Government Financial Operations.

"Traditions in government die hard—particularly, it seems, if they involve the treasurer's job," reported Timothy D. Schellhardt in the *Wall Street Journal* recently. The *Journal* article noted that it is only tradition, not law, that calls for the treasurer's signature to appear on U.S. currency.

Questions about coins or collecting? Send them to me, in care of Room 414, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. But, please, do not send coins.